

Prepared Testimony
Peter T. Gaynor, Nominee
Deputy Administrator, FEMA
United States Senate
Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
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Introduction:

Good morning Chairman Johnson, Ranking Member McCaskill, and distinguished members of this Committee. My name is Pete Gaynor, and it is a privilege to appear before you today as the President's nominee to the position of Deputy Administrator for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). I am honored to have been nominated by President Trump for this very important emergency management leadership role. If confirmed, I look forward to the opportunity to working with Secretary Nielsen, FEMA Administrator Brock Long, and the entire team at the Department of Homeland Security on building a more resilient and prepared Nation.

I would like to recognize a few members of my family that are here today, my daughter Grace and my brother Paul. Unfortunately, my wife was unable to attend. Thank you all for being here today.

I would also like to acknowledge the efforts on the men and women of FEMA and the thousands of civilian employees and military service members, from more than 30 agencies and departments across the federal government who were deployed this past year, for the singular purpose of helping others. It would be my sincere privilege to stand with and face the challenges of emergency response with these dedicated professionals, along with FEMA's state, local, tribal, territorial, non-governmental, and private partners.

Background/Experience:

I spent twenty-six years serving my country in the United States Marine Corps, first as an enlisted Marine then as a Commissioned Officer. I may be biased, but I would like to believe I have attended the finest, most demanding leadership academy in the world. From Private to Lieutenant Colonel, I have followed and lead some of the most exceptional men and women this country has produced in some of the most inhospitable and dangerous corners of the globe. I have learned how to thrive in chaos, use intellect to overcome daunting obstacles, to never ever quit and most importantly, that your personal integrity is everything.

I know from first-hand experience the significance of the Homeland Security mission and emergency response. In 2006, I deployed in support of Iraqi Freedom with the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward) and assisted with the coordination of combat operations in the Al-Anbar Province of Iraq for Multi-National and Marine forces, including numerous combat response and recovery events such as: mass casualty evacuations and recovery of downed and missing aircraft and personnel.

Prior to my tour in Iraq, I served as the head of Current Operations at Marine Corps Headquarters. I had been on the job for approximately thirty days, when I witnessed, first-hand, the attack on the Pentagon and our country on September 11, 2001. As a result of the attack, the Navy Operations Center (NOC) of our sister service was destroyed. My team and I reconfigured

our still fully-functioning Crisis Response Center in order to accommodate and reestablish the NOC with new equipment, personnel and operational support to ensure the Chief of Naval Operations could seamlessly maintain operations across the globe.

Following the attack, I managed around-the-clock operations supporting the Marine Corps around the world. My team and I also advised, managed, coordinated and executed Continuity of Operations and the Joint Emergency Evacuation Plans for Headquarters Marine Corps in support of the Global War on Terror. Prior to September 11, 2001, I served as the Executive Officer responsible for the security of the President at Camp David.

After retiring from the Marine Corps in 2007, I transitioned to my current profession of emergency management, taking with me those valuable leadership skills, training and experiences which proved to be indispensable in leading local and state level emergency operations and planning—first for the City of Providence and most recently, the State of Rhode Island.

At the city-level, I was responsible for coordinating response and recovery efforts, both large and small, including: Public Health emergencies such as H1N1, evacuations, blizzards, floods, tropical storms, mass care, Access and Functional Needs, special events and school safety. During my tenure, I led Providence's emergency management accreditation effort, which resulted in the city becoming the first municipality in the Nation to receive that distinction. At the Mayor's behest, I also served the Providence Public Schools Department, as Acting Chief of Staff, and later as Acting Chief Operating Officer, in support of the Superintendent and the 24,000 students and over 3,200 employees spread across 40 facilities.

In 2015, I was appointed by Governor Gina M. Raimondo and had the high-honor to serve as the cabinet-level Director of the Rhode Island Emergency Management Agency. As the Director, I am the senior policy advisor to the Governor on emergency management matters and the principal liaison between all local emergency management offices throughout the State and the Federal Emergency Management Agency. I am also the Chair of the State Interoperable Communications Committee, the State Emergency Response Commission, and the Vice Chair of the Emergency Management Advisory Council.

During my tenure, the agency responded to numerous small and large disasters, including one Presidentially Declared disaster and the management of at least seven preexisting active federal disasters. In addition to natural disasters, I also led the effort to completely transform the State's antiquated Cold War-era civil defense job descriptions, dating back to the 1960's, to a new modern model where we are able to hire the best and brightest to meet today's threats and hazards. For a second time, this time at the state level, I led the state's emergency management accreditation effort, successfully achieving accreditation this past year.

My experience in the Marine Corps and leading emergency management programs at the local and state levels is directly relevant to the position of FEMA Deputy Administrator. Today, we face a multitude of challenges that must be successfully navigated to ensure FEMA can deliver those critical services to the Nation when it counts the most.

If confirmed, it will be my honor to serve in what I consider to be the most challenging job of government—helping communities reduce the risks associated with future disasters, while assisting disaster survivors all across the country. I look forward to supporting Administrator

Long's three overarching Strategic Goals: Building a Culture of Preparedness, Readyng the Nation for Catastrophic Disasters, and Reducing the Complexity of FEMA. I will also work relentlessly and with purpose to better strengthen national preparedness and resilience to weather the next hazard or threat.

Conclusion:

Having the unique opportunity to serve at both the local and state levels, I recognize that our fundamental challenge is to create a robust, interconnected and enduring emergency management framework where we develop stronger, better prepared communities and citizens—all in anticipation of the unexpected. I believe we have all seen, from recent experiences, that we cannot work alone in our efforts to diminish the impact of disasters. Without prepared residents no neighborhood can be truly prepared; without strong neighborhoods no municipality can be prepared, and there can be no strong state response; and without prepared states there cannot be a truly robust, effective federal response and recovery effort.

I can think of no higher honor than serving the American people. Thank you for your consideration of my nomination and I look forward to answering any questions you may have.